

BEWARE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF GOD

May 22, 2006 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The United Church of God an International Association was formed in 1995 by ex-members of Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God. Its doctrinal platform is Armstrongism.

Armstrong denied many of the doctrines of the New Testament faith and founded a heretical cult. He rejected and reinterpreted many of the Bible's teachings, including eternal Hell, the Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and justification by grace alone without works. He held to the heresies of baptismal regeneration and soul sleep. He taught that the Sabbath and some of the Old Testament feasts are binding upon New Testament Christians. Armstrong also promoted a three tier tithing system which required twenty percent of the member's earnings annually and an additional ten percent every third year. He boldly claimed that all existing churches, except his, are apostate.

When Armstrong died in 1986 his position was filled by Joseph Tkach, who, by 1993, made significant changes in the doctrinal position of the organization. The top WCG leaders announced that they no longer believe many of the things which Armstrong taught. In particular, they acknowledged the doctrine of the Trinity, justification by grace alone without works, and the eternal security of the believer.

Determined to hold to the "old paths" that Armstrong had blazed, roughly 100 Worldwide Church of God ministers formed the United Church of God. The organization, which is headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, is ruled by a 12-person council of Elders that "oversees the strategic direction and activities of the Church."

The United Church of God is aggressive in its missionary thrust and claims to have congregations in more than 40 countries. We have met some of their people in South Asia. They attempt to proselytize those who already profess Christ by pushing their heretical doctrines.

The United Church of God denies the Trinity and rejects the doctrine that Jesus Christ is God. They call him Lord and "the divine Son," but not God. The Holy Spirit is not a Person but is "the power of God and the spirit of life eternal." Salvation is a process that requires faith in Christ, repentance, water baptism, the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit, and living a life of obedience. The Sabbath is obligatory. The seven Jewish feasts described in Leviticus 23 must be observed. These are the Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks or Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles. The

unclean animals of the Old Testament are still unclean and cannot be eaten, and the Old Testament system of tithing is still in force. Death is not a journey to heaven or hell but is merely a sleep that ends in the resurrection. "God's faithful servants" will be raised "to spirit life" as "spirit beings" (a denial of the bodily resurrection of the saved) at the beginning of the Millennium, but following the Millennium there will be a resurrection "of the vast majority of all people who have ever lived," and they will have an opportunity to be converted and gain eternal life. The United Church of God does not believe in hell as a place of eternal suffering.

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